

And so the prisoners, detainees, will be well-treated. They just won't be afforded prisoner-of-war status. I'll decide beyond that whether or not they can be noncombatants under the Geneva Convention, or not. I'll make that legal decision soon. But this administration has made the decision they'll be well-treated. Long before they arrived at Guantanamo Bay did we make that decision.

Plante [Bill Plante, CBS News].

Saudi Arabian Detainees

Q. Mr. President, the Saudi Interior Minister today said that a majority of those being held at Guantanamo, more than 100, are Saudi citizens, and asked that they be returned to Saudi Arabia for questioning.

The President. Well, I appreciate his request. And we will, of course—we'll take it under consideration. There are a lot of detainees around the world as a result of this first phase in the war against terror. There's a lot in Pakistan; there's a lot in Afghanistan; and there are 179, I believe, or whatever the number is, in Guantanamo Bay. So there's a lot of Saudi citizens that chose to fight for Al Qaida and/or the Taliban that we want to know more about. And so we'll make a decision on a case-by-case basis as to whether they go back to Saudi Arabia or not. I appreciate his suggestion.

Listen, I want to thank you all very much. Mr. Chairman, it's good to have you—

Q. May I ask Chairman Karzai a question?

The President. Ask who?

Q. May I ask Chairman Karzai something about—

The President. Of course you can ask Chairman Karzai a question. Thank you.

Q. Mr. President, I have a question—

The President. No, I'm sorry.

Afghanistan

Q. Chairman Karzai, given Afghanistan's history of fighting foreign invaders and its pride and independence, are you concerned about any political sensitivity—[inaudible]—in establishing an Afghan military? And how would you describe the ideal partnership between the United States?

Chairman Karzai. Well, we have no concerns there. As I mentioned in my remarks earlier, the Afghans are grateful that we were

helped twice, once during the Soviet occupation, by the U.S., and now to fight terrorism and liberate ourselves from that menace. We are a fiercely independent country, and the world knows that. Our neighbors know that very well, and the countries in the region know that.

The Afghan request for training of our army is nothing new. Our prime ministers were here even back in the 1950's to ask this kind of training. And it's training and a relationship between two independent, sovereign countries, and nothing to worry others.

Usama bin Laden

Q. Chairman Karzai, have you discussed in regards with Usama bin Laden, and what can you do to gather more information to capture him?

Chairman Karzai. We are looking for him. He's a fugitive. If we find him, we'll catch him.

Thank you very much.

The President. That's right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:58 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; Minister of Interior Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia; and Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization. The President also referred to the Report of the National Energy Policy Development Group, which was issued May 2001; and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and Chairman Hamid Karzai on a New Partnership Between the United States and Afghanistan

January 28, 2002

President Bush and Chairman Karzai commit to build a lasting partnership for the 21st century, determined to fight terrorism, and ensure security, stability and reconstruction for Afghanistan, and foster representative and accountable government for all Afghan

women and men. We stand together for a new and better future for Afghanistan—a future free from terror, war, and want. We pledge our respect for the culture and traditions of the different peoples of Afghanistan, and for the great religion of Islam, which has been tragically distorted and misused by the Taliban.

We reaffirm our commitment to continue to work together to rout out the remnants of the Taliban and Al Qaida network. The United States and Afghanistan stand united in our determination that Afghanistan will never again become a training ground for global terror. We are equally determined that Afghanistan's tragic experience—where terrorists were allowed to hold an entire nation hostage—will not be repeated or replicated anywhere in the world.

The United States and Afghanistan share the belief that a secure, stable Afghanistan, at peace with its neighbors, is critical to achieving our shared goals. We agree that a lasting, permanent solution for Afghanistan's security needs must be based on strengthening Afghanistan's own capacities.

We agree that the United States will work with Afghanistan's friends in the international community to help Afghanistan stand up and train a national military and police, as well as address Afghanistan's short-term security needs, including through demining assistance. We further agree to continue to support the mission of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to help promote security in Afghanistan. Chairman Karzai asked President Bush, on behalf of the Afghan people to consider supporting an extension and expansion of the ISAF.

Recognizing that representative and accountable national government is vital for Afghanistan to achieve stability, national reconciliation, and reconstruction, we reaffirm our shared determination to support the Bonn Agreement for a political transition process in Afghanistan over the next two years. Both sides recognize the importance of adhering strictly to the agreement's timetable.

We agree to support collaborative programs to strengthen Afghan civic institutions, working through Afghan and American NGOs to build and strengthen political struc-

tures, independent media, human rights protections, labor unions, accountability and anti-corruption initiatives.

We also agree to launch a joint U.S.-Afghanistan Women's Council to promote private/public partnerships and mobilize resources to ensure women can gain the skills and education deprived them under years of Taliban mis-rule.

The United States and Afghanistan further agree that the Voice of America will expand its broadcast of Afghan news throughout Afghanistan as VOA and international partners work with Afghanistan to develop its own media capacity.

We both welcome the role of the United States in helping with Afghanistan's reconstruction, including the initial American contribution of nearly \$297 million for Afghanistan's critical reconstruction and the transfer of \$223 million in previously frozen Afghan assets. We affirm our determination to move quickly to help Afghanistan create jobs and start rebuilding Afghanistan's agricultural sector, its health care and educational systems. Concrete examples of programs, in addition to our current humanitarian aid program and contributions to large infrastructure projects, that will have immediate impact are to:

- print and distribute nearly 10 million textbooks in Dari and Pashtu, focused on math, reading and science, in time for the official start of the Afghan school year in March;
- provide basic training for 4,000 teachers, at least half of whom are women;
- vaccinate 2.2 million Afghan children against measles and set up primary care community health clinics; and
- use \$45 million in food-related programs to, in part, promote recovery by providing food directly to teachers and students at school and food to workers at project sites.

Our joint commitment to the development of Afghanistan's private sector will be bolstered by an initial U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) \$50 million line of credit to finance qualified U.S. private sector projects. We are pleased to announce that in February OPIC, the Export-Import Bank, and the U.S. Trade Development

Agency, will conduct an investment assessment mission to Afghanistan and that the Commerce Department will lead a private sector mission to Afghanistan to help identify Afghanistan's investment needs and opportunities for U.S. private sector participation in reconstruction. We welcome a U.S. Department of Labor initiative to fund job generation and training programs for ex-combatants and women.

Finally, we pledge to enhance understanding between the citizens of our two countries by promoting people-to-people exchanges and cultural initiatives, including through the Fulbright, International Visitor and Humphrey programs, as well as through non-governmental organizations. Recognizing that the Taliban destroyed several of Afghanistan's great historic statues and cultural sites, we agreed to work together to help restore and preserve Afghanistan's heritage.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

January 28, 2002

Medicare

The President. I want to thank the Members from both the House and the Senate, both of the political parties, for coming to discuss an incredibly important issue, and that is Medicare. We had good discussions last year, and now it's time to get something done.

We need a comprehensive reform plan that includes prescription drugs for every senior. And the will of the folks around this table is to work together to do just that, is to make sure our seniors have got the capacity to have a—to purchase prescription drugs. That's what we all want.

And I believe that given the right focus and the right efforts, we can achieve that objective. And while we're doing so, we want Medicare to be modernized. We want it to be a system that is relevant for seniors today and for tomorrow. And it's not. It's a sys-

tem—it's old, and it's tired, and it needs to be looked at in a way that recognizes we've made a commitment to our country's seniors. But we want the commitment to work.

And so, the Members around this table have all come back to town and said, "Let's get something done." And I'm so thrilled to have them here, and I appreciate the spirit. And it's going to require that kind of spirit to get it done.

I'm looking forward to my speech tomorrow night. I will mention Medicare in my speech. We need to make it work; we need for there to be a prescription drug plan in the program.

Thank you all for coming.

Legislative Agenda in an Election Year

Q. Do you think it will be likely in an election year, sir? Is it likely in an election year, sir?

The President. You know, that's why you run for office. Election year or no election year, it's time to get something done. And this is not an issue for the faint-hearted, but it's the right thing to do. And Members around here understand it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:27 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Death of Michael Hammond

January 29, 2002

Michael Hammond was an accomplished conductor, composer, and advocate of the arts. His commitment to excellence and his extraordinary talents will be greatly missed.

Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union

January 29, 2002

Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, Vice President Cheney, Members of Congress, distinguished guests, fellow citizens: As we gather tonight, our Nation is at war; our economy is in recession; and the civilized